

How are the charities we support through our Outward Giving coping during the pandemic? Over the next few weeks we share some of their experiences.

Shooting Star Children's Hospices and South West Surrey Cruse Bereavement Care



The priority at **Shooting Star Children's Hospices** (www.shootingstar.org.uk) is to maintain services where possible and to ensure the safety of the children and families they care for, their staff, volunteers and supporters.

The hospices

The children they support are in a high-risk category so Shooting Star has had to make tough decisions to ensure they and their families are safe. The measures currently in place are:

- continuing to provide end-of-life care and emergency or urgent respite (planned home or hospice respite is currently not available)
- delivering all clinical services from the Guildford hospice, Christopher's (whilst families continue to shield, the Hampton hospice will remain closed)
- a 'virtual hospice', including groups, a Facebook page and a resource 'hub', to continue to reach as many families as possible
- groups, events and daycare have stopped, and professional training postponed
- only supported families and care staff are permitted at the hospice.

Fundraising

They are thankful that, at a time when their vital services are most needed, they will receive some short-term government funding. However, they remain very reliant on their community of supporters to ensure they will be here long into the future.

A number of fundraising events have had to be cancelled. Their shops all had to close in March and only the Cobham and Weybridge shops have so far reopened – the others, including the Guildford shop in the Upper High Street, all remain closed. *[Update: the Guildford shop is now open, though not for donations, Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–4pm.]*

The team

Some of the wider team have been furloughed. To ensure safe provision of end-of-life care and urgent or emergency respite, all the in-house nurses and many of the health care assistants are now working from Christopher's. Some of the nurses and carers have also been seconded to St Peter's hospital to support the NHS.

Helen and Mark Lee – Parish Friends

July 2020

South West Surrey Cruse Bereavement Care (which covers the boroughs of Guildford, Waverley and Surrey Heath) has responded to the current crisis by switching to telephone and email support, since face-to-face meetings are obviously not possible. This switch has in fact been happening gradually over the last few years, so many of the bereavement volunteers had already been trained in these alternative methods, and others have recently been able to receive training online. The referral secretaries have continued to answer the phone at their advertised times, and because volunteers do not have to travel they are able to take on more clients in the time they have available.

Partly for these reasons, then, the waiting list has not grown enormously, as might have been expected. Another factor is that referrals have actually dropped. However, this is not unusual during times of national emergency – similar to the effect on GP practices (“We shouldn't bother the doctor”). In normal circumstances, bereaved people generally refer themselves to Cruse some three to six months after the death. It is suspected, therefore, that those people whose loved ones died before the pandemic are holding back, and those more recently bereaved are still in shock, whether the death was Covid-related or not. In either case, people might well be thinking that there are others who need help more than they do.

I would urge anyone who is bereaved to look at the SWS Cruse website (<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/local-services/south/south-west-surrey>) and/or phone the referral line, 01483 565660, which is manned on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings. There is willing help out there, so please take up the offer!

Vicky Barlow – Parish Friend and former bereavement counsellor for Cruse

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